

**Pennsylvania Preferred
Report
Undergraduate Project
Fall 2002**

In the Fall of 2002 an undergraduate Market Research Class at Saint Joseph's University was asked to continue the research completed over the summer by the Graduate Market Research Class. The report from the previous class is attached to this report. In summary, the previous class found:

- Consumers surveyed had a positive image of Pennsylvania
- That the image was linked to history, open farmland, the Amish, and the Poconos
- That preferred meant the "majority of people like it" or "better than others"
- That a Pennsylvania endorsement had a positive effect on peoples opinions
- That this was dependent on the product with fresh items having most importance
- That locally grown product carried a connotation of freshness
- That freshness was the most important attribute for Pennsylvania products

Overall the results indicated that fresh and wholesome sell. That local products are seen as fresher. That Pennsylvania's image is wholesome. That for these reasons Pennsylvania Preferred should have positive affect for consumers. This fact should result in success for the Pennsylvania Preferred label on fresh products.

The challenge for the Fall class was to set up a sampling program in stores with two objectives. First, the students were to observe consumer reactions when given samples and told that the products were from Pennsylvania. Second, to see if the emphasis on Pennsylvania Products would positively impact sales.

The products chosen for this research were Bell & Evans Chicken and Country Time Farms Sausage and Hot Dogs. Both of these companies produce a natural antibiotic free product that is extremely fresh. Both companies are Pennsylvania based.

The students were assigned to groups and each group was required to study the area of organic and natural foods and write a secondary research report on it. The groups also conducted an observation study.

The observations were made of customers to whom students were serving samples of the products. The samplings were set up in 4 Clemens Markets and in Fresh Grocer (a university city specialty grocer).

Each of the Clemens Markets was sampled twice for four hours over two consecutive weekends. Chefs were hired from the School of Culinary Arts in Philadelphia to cook the samples and gave the sampling an air of prestige. Students were giving out the samples at the stores and were dressed in business casual so that customers would feel comfortable interacting with them.

Before going out to the stores students were trained as to the specific attributes of the product they should emphasize during the sampling. They were also trained to do unobtrusive observation. No clipboards or notes were visible and their interactions with the customers were to be conversational and informative. No selling was to take place.

They informally recorded their observations out of sight of the customers.

At the end of the project each group presented a qualitative analysis of their observations. Given the wide diversity of stores and students their observations were surprisingly consistent.

Qualitative Observations

Approximately 50% of the people who passed by the display or were approached tried the product.

Of these approximately one in three purchased or said they would purchase the product. Not all sampling was done near the display counter so observation of all purchases was not possible.

The reaction to the taste of both the Bell and Evans Chicken and the Country Times Pork products was overwhelmingly positive. There were no reports of negative verbal reactions and no negative body language was reported for either product.

For both products about 50% of the customers asked how it was prepared. When told the chicken was cooked in a little lemon juice, pepper and garlic they acted surprised at the flavor that it had. Several customers commented that they felt sure it was spices that they tasted since the product did not taste like any other chicken they had tasted. The reaction was similar for the sausage and hot dogs since these were not seasoned at all.

Overwhelmingly customers commented on the “fresh” taste of the product. As I said for the chicken they commented on how it didn’t taste like any other chicken they ever tasted. For the sausage they commented on how “rich and sweet” it was. When they asked how this was achieved they were told that the products were brought to market right after production and were never frozen. They were also told that this resulted from the natural way the product was produced and the absence of any antibiotics or hormones in the product.

The customers reacted negatively to the high price of the product but despite the high price one in three made or indicated they would make a purchase.

About half of the customers who tasted the product stopped and discussed the product with the students. The average time spent in these discussions was 45 seconds to a minute, which is about triple the norm.

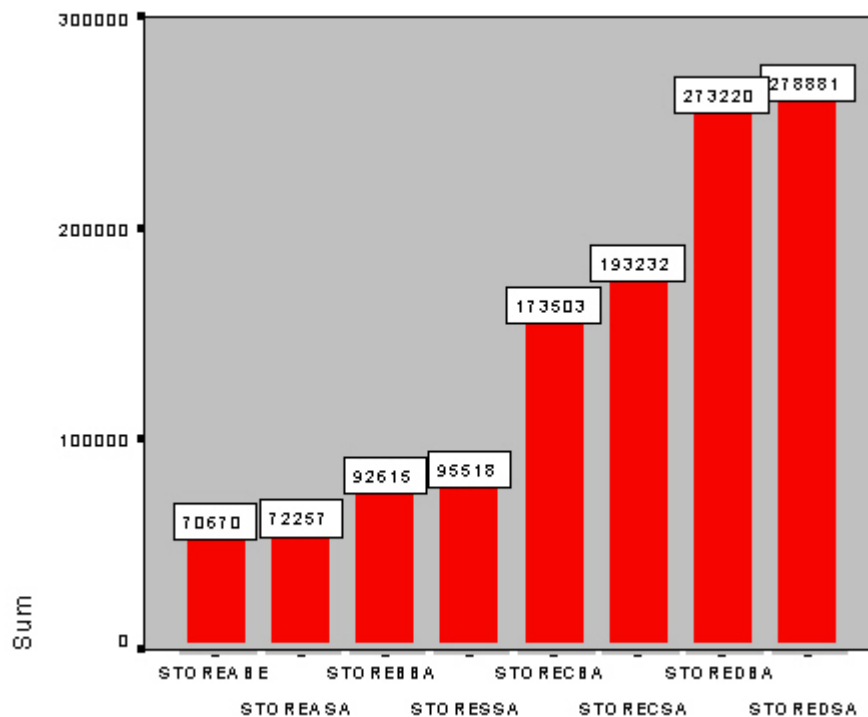
All of the groups observed that “freshness” and “taste” were the attributes in which customers were most interested. Next was that it was all natural and antibiotic free. The fact that it was Pennsylvania grown was of interest only to a small number of consumers. I will discuss this later.

Sales

The Country Time Farms Pork was sampled at Fresh Grocer. All of the available product sold during the samplings. In fact the product sold out before sampling was completed on the last day.

The sales of Bell and Evans Chicken exceeded baseline sales in all of the stores. This is not surprising since we know sampling sells product. However, coupled with the overwhelmingly positive remarks that were heard and the overwhelmingly positive reaction that was observed this was a very successful sampling.

Sales for Bell and Evans Chicken in the stores for the sampling weeks and base weeks are shown in Chart 1. Note that the sales numbers are disguised since Clemens Markets is privately owned, however the relationships between base and sampling weeks are preserved.



You will note that the increase in sales only averages a little under one percent. However it should be noted that each store was only sampled for a total of 4 hours in any week. This represents only 4 percent of the total hours the store is open.

Also, the wide diversity in sales over the four stores is attributable to two factors. First, the demographics of the individual stores varied. Stores with a higher

income profile sold more of this product regularly. Second, the amount of time the product had been carried in a particular store. The longer carried the higher the base sales.

Conclusions

This study reinforced the findings of the earlier surveys and interviews.

Fresh and wholesome are most important attributes.

Taste sells so products have to have superior taste and freshness.

Some consumers are interested in natural characteristics but only if they provide a food that tastes good.

While the interest in products being from Pennsylvania was not strong this supports the findings of the earlier survey. No one food dominates the consumers' image of Pennsylvania. However, the characteristics of freshness and wholesomeness and good taste do. These are totally consistent with the images customers have of Pennsylvania. Images of history, tradition, Amish values, open farmland, and mountains are all consistent with freshness and wholesomeness.

The canvas is unpainted at this time. The job is to help customers recognize that Pennsylvania Preferred means fresh, wholesome, and traditional tied into foods. If this can be done, this image is exportable.